

tius. It never colonized that island, as has been the case in Aldabra. It is, of course, impossible to say by what means the bird, which is not a strong flier in its native country, reached Aldabra, an island in a direct line considerably nearer to Madagascar than Mauritius; but no one can doubt that the Aldabra race is a direct descendant from the Madagascar type, which having reached an island in which there was no occasion for exercising its power of flight, disused a mode of locomotion naturally distasteful to it. As an immediate consequence, the muscles and bones of the wing became aborted; and if we are allowed to judge from our domestic aquatic birds, the shortening of the limb, as we observe it in the Aldabra bird, may have been effected within a very limited number of generations. In such a case it seems to me as great an error to efface the evidence of close relationship by giving a distinct binomial term to the descendant race as it would be not to distinguish it at all from the parent type; and no method appears to me to be more appropriate and expressive than to designate the Aldabra bird as *Rallus gularis*, var. *aldabrana*.

XIX.—*On two Races or Subspecies of Indian Birds inhabiting Ceylon.* By Captain W. V. LEGGE, R.A., F.Z.S., &c.

Acridotheres melanosternus, n. subsp.

A comparison of the entire series of *Acridotheres tristis* in the national collection, from all parts of India, as well as from localities into which the Indian species has been introduced, such as the Mauritius and Bourbon, has convinced me of the propriety of separating the Ceylonese race; and for it I propose the above title.

Messrs. Blyth and Jerdon pointed out many years ago that the Ceylon birds of this species were darker than the Indian. The former, in his Catalogue of the Birds of the Asiatic Society's Museum (1849), has the following remark:—"No. 574, *Dark variety* from Ceylon. Presented by Dr. Templeton." Jerdon follows, in his 'Birds of India,' vol. ii., with "those from Ceylon appear to be always darker." It is true the Ceylon race is much darker, both as regards the coloration of the upper surface and the hue of the flanks; but the writers in question appear to have overlooked a feature in the plumage of the bird which is constant in the Ceylon race and always absent in the Indian, viz. that the black of the throat descends down the centre of the breast, and passes round above the white

abdomen, forming a sort of border to this region. In the Indian race this part is somewhat lighter than the surrounding plumage, instead of being darker. Specimens from the northern parts of the peninsula are less albescent down the centre of the lower breast, and the sides of it are a pale, though sullied-looking, isabelline colour.

The nearest approach to the coloration of the Ceylonese bird is found, as one would naturally expect, in those from Travancore, which have the black of the throat descending a little more upon the breast than in northern specimens, and have the *inner webs* of the feathers, exactly down the centre of the breast, blackish brown; but this is all, and this trifling amount of nigrescent marking does not continue down to the white of the abdomen.

Pyctorhis nasalis, n. subsp.

The Ceylonese race of *Pyctorhis sinensis* has the nostril as black as the bill, there being no trace of the yellow colour round the nostril which characterizes birds from all parts of the Peninsula and Burmah. It is altogether a darker bird than the continental, the latter having the head reddish brown and the outer webs of the quills cinnamon or pale chestnut-red. A comparison of a fine series of Ceylonese with an equally good one of Indian examples shows me that the pale character is constant in the latter, and the dark coloration equally so in the former. The insular bird has the primaries margined externally with reddish brown, which imparts a very different appearance from that which is noticeable in the red closed wing of the Indian form. It is somewhat remarkable that such a peculiar distinction should exist as that which I have noticed in regard to this bird's nostril; and I therefore have proposed the above title for our race, which I think will be found to be a well-marked subspecies of the genus in question.

I trust that ere long these two birds will be figured by Mr. Kculemans's talented pencil in Part II. of the 'Birds of Ceylon.'

MISCELLANEOUS.

On the Genus Catagma.

To the Editors of the Annals and Magazine of Natural History.

GENTLEMEN,—Will you allow me to correct a mistake which occurs in my paper on the genus *Catagma* *? It is there stated that "no

* 'Annals,' ser. 5, vol. ii. p. 359.